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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* General Assembly begins fiftieth session by electing Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal as its President.

* Security Council deplores rapidly escalating military situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; calls on parties to cease military activities and respect rights of civilian population.

* Two Danish peace-keepers killed during fighting between Croatian and Bosnian Serb forces around town of Dvor; United Nations holds Croatians directly responsible for incident.

* Secretary-General says world revolution is underway and only United Nations has network, experience and legitimacy to meet new challenges.

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The General Assembly today began its fiftieth session by electing Diogo Freitas do Amaral (Portugal) as its President. In his statement to the Assembly, Mr. do Amaral said that despite its failures in the past fifty years, the United Nations had achieved its principal goal of preventing a third world war. It had also contributed decisively to progress in the field of disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to the peace processes in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and other countries.

The United Nations had done more than any other institution to guarantee the primacy of international law, President do Amaral said. Without the rule of law, humanity could know neither peace nor freedom. In that regard, the International Court of Justice deserved special recognition. The Organization had made human rights universal, by inducing Members to accept that the state existed to serve man and not vice-versa. It had also affirmed second-generation fundamental rights, particularly economic, social and cultural ones, and was today focusing attention on third-generation rights, particularly with regard to the protection of nature and the environment.

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ones, and was today focusing attention on third-generation rights, particularly with regard to the protection of nature and the environment.

Decolonization and the end of apartheid were major victories for the United Nations, the President continued. The Organization had also assisted the process of democratization in numerous countries that had decided of their own free will to move from a single-party to a multi-party system. One of the most important and overlooked aspects of the United Nations was the work done by its specialized bodies and agencies to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the world's poorest and neediest countries.

Mr. do Amaral called attention to the problems of the present and the prospects for the future. A new international order was beginning to take shape, but its form was still vague, confused and imprecise. The cold war was over but peace had yet to be consolidated, flare-ups of radical nationalism had yet to be brought under control, and human rights had yet to be guaranteed in many parts of the world. At the same time, the United Nations must be reformed and strengthened with the aim of ensuring the peaceful coexistence and equitable development of all the world's peoples.

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The Security Council has deplored the rapidly escalating military situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and expressed deep concern about the resulting plight of the civilian population. In a statement by its President, Francesco Paolo Fulci (Italy), last night, the Council demanded that all the parties involved immediately cease military activities and hostile acts in western Bosnia, and fully respect the rights of the local population.

The Council reiterated that there could be no military solution to the Bosnian conflict and urged the parties not to take advantage of the present situation. It once again expressed its full support for the Geneva Declaration of Principles of 8 September, which provided a basis for negotiations for a lasting peace throughout the region.

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Two Danish peace-keepers were killed and eight were injured yesterday during an exchange of fire between Croatian and Bosnian Serb forces around the town of Dvor, according to a United Nations spokesman. The peace-keepers' bunker was hit by a Serb shell, but the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) held the Croatian Army directly responsible for the incident. The Croatians had deliberately placed their firing positions close to United Nations facilities in the expectation of return fire from the Serbs.

Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic announced this morning that Croatian forces had been instructed to stop their advance in western Bosnia, the spokesman noted. However, no similar instructions were issued to the

Bosnian forces in the area. There were reports that the situation had stabilized somewhat south and north-west of Banja Luka, although more than 100,000 Serb refugees were still on the move as a result of the recent fighting.

Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs continued to withdraw their heavy weapons from the 20-kilometre exclusion zone around Sarajevo. The Commander of the United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF), General Bernard Janvier, met today with the Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), General Rupert Smith, to assess the level of Serb compliance with United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) demands in that regard.

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The world is crying out for peace and for the economic and social development that peace alone can assure, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a statement for the International Day of Peace, he said that the goal for the General Assembly's historic fiftieth session should be kept clear and simple -- it should be peace.

At a luncheon at Headquarters today, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that a world revolution was underway which required a new system for international relations. While the sovereign State was the only foundation for such a system, the State alone could not act with the powers it once had. A true international community must be created through the work the United Nations. Only the United Nations offered an integrated approach based on its global network, matchless experience and universal legitimacy.

Regarding the performance of the United Nations, political will, not structure, was the issue, the Secretary-General stressed. Reform was necessary within the Secretariat, but the real arena for reform was the intergovernmental area. "The future is ours to build," he continued. "The United Nations is the place where it can be done. And without the United Nations, it cannot be done."

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